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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CAIRO 008602

SIPDIS

NSC STAFF FOR SINGH

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [EG](#)

SUBJECT: EGYPT: PATTERNS EMERGING AS PA ELECTIONS MOVE TO RUNOFFS ON NOVEMBER 15

REF: A. CAIRO 8556

[B](#). CAIRO 8555

[C](#). CAIRO 8554

[D](#). CAIRO 8546

[E](#). CAIRO 8501

Classified by ECPO Minister-Counselour Michael Corbin for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

Summary

[1](#). (C) Runoffs for the first stage of Egypt's parliamentary elections will be held on November 15. Almost 80 percent of the constituencies will have runoffs. Emerging patterns include a predictably strong performance by the ruling NDP, a noteworthy show of strength by the Muslim Brotherhood, and a miserable showing by the recognized opposition parties. The independent/opposition press, and Egyptian contacts, are seized by developments in two constituencies in which intimidation and/or manipulation appears to have been particularly blatant. Domestic observers, who were a prominent feature of the November 9 polls, will again be out in force on November 15, and emboffs will also be out to take readings at a number of polling sites. End Summary.

Stage One: Round Two

[2](#). (SBU) The first stage of People's Assembly elections, covering metropolitan Cairo and several provinces in the Delta, Upper Egypt, and the Western Desert, will continue on November 15, with runoff elections. The runoffs will be staged in 62 constituencies, representing about 80 percent of the constituencies competed on November 9. (According to Egyptian law, candidates must secure at least 51 percent of the vote to be elected. If they fail to do so in the first round, the two leading candidates advance to a runoff.)

Patterns

[3](#). (C) With so many of the races going to runoffs, it is too early to make many definitive pronouncements about the first stage of the elections, but several significant patterns appear to be emerging:

-- Official candidates of the NDP performed generally well, although most will still have to compete in runoffs.

-- Independent candidates who are affiliated to the NDP but who failed to secure the party's nomination are the second strongest candidate category. Observers anticipate that these candidates, if elected, will be welcomed back into the NDP to join the majority bloc.

-- Muslim Brotherhood candidates (who are nominally independent) also made a strong showing. They will compete in 42 of the 62 runoffs.

-- Recognized opposition parties fared miserably, failing to secure any seats in the first round. Only 9 opposition party candidates will compete in runoffs on November 15. Of these, most are long-shots. While there are still two more stages of elections, each with likely run-offs, at this rate the recognized opposition parties will be lucky to retain their tiny presence in the outgoing parliament.

Irregularities

[4](#). (C) As discussed refuels, domestic election monitors were out in force on November 9 and will also be deployed in large numbers on November 15. Among the irregularities documented by the monitors on November 9 were:

-- flawed voter registries containing missing entries,
multiple entries, and many deceased voters;

-- late openings and early or unexplained closures of polling
stations in numerous districts;

-- credible allegations of vote buying in many districts,
(including several instances witnessed by Embassy observers);

-- several cases of stolen/missing ballot boxes; and

-- scattered intimidation of voters.

15. (SBU) Although there were several reports of firearms
discharged in different districts, we are aware of no
fatalities occurring on November 9. (By contrast in the 2000
PA elections, 12 people were killed in violence during the
Cairo round.)

Extreme Examples

16. (C) While predictions that fraud and intimidation would
take on relatively more subtle forms this year have so far
proven accurate, there has been considerable indignation in
the opposition and independent press, echoed by our contacts,
about two races in particular:

-- In the Dokki district of Giza, the parliamentary elections
commission has twice revised its official pronouncements on
the race pitting MB Hazem Abou Ismail against NDP scion (and
Deputy PA Speaker) Amal Othman. Although the commission
pronounced Abou Ismail the outright winner on November 10
(ref A), by November 11 they announced that Abou Ismail had
not actually won an outright majority and would have to go to
a runoff against Othman. Outrage from Ismail's supporters
was compounded on November 12 when the elections commission
announced that a further recount determined that Othman had
won outright and that there would be no runoff. Belief that
these results were unsightly manipulated is nearly universal
in Cairo.

-- More information is emerging about the successful efforts
of NDP candidate Yahya Wahdan, a Colonel in the State
Security office until three weeks ago, to unseat leading
opposition figure Ayman Nour in the working class Cairo
neighborhood of Bab Shariya. A journalist contact told us he
was present in a polling station when Wahdan's brother,
accompanied by a thuggish entourage, ejected Ghad Party
representatives there to observe the counting, adding that
these expulsions occurred at many polling stations in the
district. Another journalist wrote that he had witnessed a
judge in a polling station systematically invalidating
ballots for Nour during the count.

-- Both Nour and Abou Ismail are contesting the results in
administrative court and will get a hearing on November 22.

Results Annulled in Four Districts

17. (SBU) In another sign of judicial regulation of the
electoral process, an administrative court annulled on
November 13 the results in four constituencies and ordered
that they be re-competed, with the timing and modalities to
be worked out. The court rulings are based on an archaic
clause of the constitution, still applied literally, which
reserves 50 percent of the PA seats to "workers" and
"farmers." Court action in these particular districts
appears to have been triggered by specific challenges to the
qualifications of individual candidates. One of the four
constituencies that will have repeat elections is Wayli,
where Mounir Abdel Nour, the prominent Christian businessman
and leader of the Wafd Party's tiny parliamentary bloc was
initially pronounced defeated.

Looking Ahead

18. (SBU) After the results of the November 15 runoffs become
available, probably sometime on November 16, we will have a
clearer picture of the key trends in this year's PA
elections. The second round of parliamentary races, to be
staged in much of the Nile Delta and Alexandria, kick off on
November 20, and the final round will commence on December 1,
with the last runoffs on December 7.

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